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# MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, May 1895.

"VERGEBEN" IN GOETHE'S TASSO,

II, 3; l. 1404.

AMONG the passages in Goethe's Tasso hitherto not explained to the full satisfaction of commentators, the line:

"Vergib dir nur, dem Ort vergiebst du nichts" (1404),

has probably called forth the largest number of differing opinions. A natural connection with the context and the ability to satisfy its own author are two things in favor of the explanation attempted in the following lines, neither of which is claimed by Kern, Düntzer, Strehlke and Thomas for their respective renderings.

In line 1394:

"Welch hoher Geist in einer engen Brust!"—

Antonio scoffs at the excessive passion and boldness of Tasso; reminds him that in fighting with words he makes himself no better than the rabble, and thus provokes Tasso's challenge anew. Not inclined to accept it, Antonio refuses on grounds valid in themselves, but not proof against Tasso's rage:

"... doch weiss ich, wo ich bin" (1398),

and:

"Wie du nicht fordern solltest, folg' ich nicht" (1400).

In thus reminding Tasso that as an inferior in rank and age he ought not to challenge, nor to expect to have his challenge heeded, he hints at the real obstacle; but as Tasso sees in these refusals simply pretenses invented by cowardice, Antonio mentions plainly the qualities in Tasso owing to which his challenge is refused: his cowardice, implying, of course, other attendant characteristics indicated above:

"Der Feige droht nur, wo er sicher ist" (1402),

using the adverb *wo* in the secondary sense (*=falls*);—cf. ll. 1376-7:

"Du traust auf Schonung, die dich nur zu sehr  
Im frechen Laufe deines Glücks verzog."

Tasso, still not perceiving Antonio's real meaning, and misapprehending the ambiguous word *wo*, once more urges that they repair to a place where the duel may be fought. Then

Antonio removes the last doubt by insisting, that the fault lies not in the place, but in Tasso himself:

"Vergieb dir nur, dem Ort vergiebst du nichts."

*Vergeben* has here, through its first meaning, 'to pardon,' the not very unnatural additional one: 'to accuse,' to 'impute to,' and with this substitution the line might be paraphrased: "Schreib's nur dir selber zu, was du erfährst, denn wahrlich,—an dem Ort liegt nicht die Schuld, also hast du auch dem Ort nichts zu vergeben." Tasso now fully understands Antonio's position and the cause of his refusal, and, exasperated at the thought that not even the sanctity of the place could prevent indignities such as he has suffered from Antonio, he cries out: [Habe ich also dem Ort nichts zu vergeben, so]

"Verzeihe mir der Ort, dass ich es litt,"

and draws his sword.

The wrong implied in the word *vergeben* gives to it the peculiar significance in this place; if I forgive or pardon any one, he must first have committed some wrong against me.—

In exactly the same way *vergeben* is used in Schiller's *Don Carlos* iv, 14, where the queen says to Alva and Domingo:

"Denn wirklich

Muss ich gestehn, ich war schon in Gefahr,  
Den schlimmen Dienst, der mir bei meinem Herrn  
Geleistet worden,—Ihnen zu vergeben."

With "Den schlimmen Dienst" she refers to the forcible opening of her casket and the disclosure of her correspondence with Don Carlos to her husband, the king.

In two passages from Lessing it is possible to interpret the word *vergeben* in the same way: the first is in his *Briefe, die neueste Litteratur betreffend*, Dritter Theil, 49 Brief, about the middle of the letter:

"Da ich zugegeben, dass die geoffenbarte Religion, unsere Bewegungsgründe, recht-schaffen zu handeln, vermehre, so sehen Sie wohl, dass ich der Religion nichts *vergeben* will. Nur auch der Vernunft nichts."

I should interpret: so sehen Sie wohl, dass ich der Religion gegenüber keineswegs eine feindliche Stellung einzunehmen beabsichtige, an ihr keine Mängel suche. Again, *Briefe an*

*verschiedene Gottesgelehrte*, in the second letter to Dr. Walch:

"Ich setze diesem schneidenden Satze andere vielleicht (dieses "Vielleicht" soll mir aber durchaus nichts *vergeben*) eben so schneidende Sätze entgegen."

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#### NOTE ON THE PHOENIX, VERSE 151.

VERSE 59 of the Latin *Phoenix*

"Quae postquam uitae iam mille peregerit annos"

becomes in the Old-English translation

*oð þæt he þusende pisses lifes  
wudubearwes weard wintra gebideȝ.*

All the editions that I have seen retain the reading *þusende* in this passage, though Grein cites it as *þusendo* in his Glossary. Thorpe translates it "a thousand," perhaps because he took it for a singular, but more probably from mere ignorance or inadvertence, if we can judge from the general character of his version of the Exeter poetry; Bright marks it in his glossary as plural.

A plural form *þusende* can be explained only by assuming that English has kept the feminine form along with the neuter, as in some of the other tongues of the Group. This involves no serious difficulty, but it would not be easy to find a good reason for a change from singular to plural by the translator, especially in view of the fact that the length of life of the Phoenix is expressed by *þusend wintra* in verse 364 also. I am inclined to explain the form, therefore, as a singular. As is shown by the other Teutonic languages, the word for "thousand" was originally double in form, the stem ending either in *-jo*, (neuter) or in *-jā*, (feminine). The former would give us a nom.-acc. sg. *þusende*, like *ærende*; the usual form *þusend* is the result of the transfer to the simple *o*-stems. An older form is found in many words once or twice, though the later form is the prevailing one, and this may be the present case. An excellent analogy is furnished in verse 590 of the same poem, where we have a nom. sg. *hælende* instead of the usual form *hælend*. (*Hælende* is also found in the *Orosius*, p. 250, ed. Sweet.)

The only other instances of a form *þusende*

that I have found, are cited in Grein's Glossary from the *Psalms*. In civ, 8, we have *on þusende* for the Latin "in mille." If we had a right to assume that the translation is exact, this form would rightly be considered an acc. sg., but it may be dative. The other case is cxviii, 72, where *þusende goldes and seolfres* translates "millia auri et argenti." This may be cited in confirmation of the existence of a feminine form in English, if that theory be adopted to explain the form in the *Phoenix*. It would be quite as easy, however, to assume that the translator changed the word to the singular in this passage, as that it was changed to the plural in the other.

If this explanation is not accepted, I should be inclined to amend the reading to *þusend*. This reading is favored by its occurrence in verse 364, and by the Latin original. The reading in the text may be the result of a blunder on the part of the copyist, who was misled by the following words *pisses lifes*, into supposing that the meaning was "the end of this life," and changed *þusend* accordingly to *þus ende*. For the metre of the hemistich, when thus amended, compare verse 166.

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#### ARRANGEMENT OF THE CANTERBURY TALES.

FOR more than a century this subject has claimed attention, but only a few years ago one of our leaders in criticism said:† —

"No criticism has succeeded in making out anything like a sound and satisfactory arrangement. And even the latest ingenious and applauded attempt of this kind was foredoomed to failure (except by violent and arbitrary proceedings) from the impossibility of reconciling contradictions which the poet did not remove."

The matter is by no means so desperate; all this labor has not been in vain, and criticism has been remarkably successful in removing apparent contradictions and revealing a consistent plan underlying the unfinished work. However, a thorough examination of the subject has convinced me that the accepted ar-

† Ten Brink, *English Literature*, ii, pt. 1 (trans. Robinson), New York, 1893, p. 150.